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Dick West

The Lighter Side

CIA Sometimes Waxes Comical

By DICK WEST

FOIAb3b

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Central Intelligence Agency maintains a security system that is so tight it would appear at times to be self-defeating.

The purpose of the system is to keep the CIA out of the public eye, and vice versa. The need for that is understandable.

But in its quest for anonymity the agency on occasions has gone to such extremes the effect has been to call attention to itself.

Some of these incidents have produced comic overtones, as in the old silent movies where the guy who is tiptoeing around steps on a piece of fly paper.

Most recently the CIA made itself surreptitiously conspicuous by telling a page who was trying to deliver a letter from Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, to the agency director

Long Interrogation

Although the Senator's office had apprised the agency of the page's mission, he was upon arrival interrogated at length and sent away with the letter undelivered.

I am not informed as to what the guards told the lad. "There ain't nobody here but us penguins and we're invisible" probably.

The things that I find most intriguing about the CIA's security system is the way its operating expenses are handled. Funds for the agency are concealed somewhere in the massive federal budget, so that only a few persons know how much money it is spending.

I enjoy going through the budget and picking out items that I think might be used to mask a few bucks for the CIA. For instance, there is the Abaca fiber program.

According to the budget for fiscal 1964, this program is taking nothing out of the Treasury and is putting \$99,000 back in. That certainly looks suspicious. In fact, it's downright unbureaucratic.

No Such Thing

My hunch is that there's really no such thing as Abaca fiber and that the money actually is going to the CIA.

On page 822 of the budget, \$408,000 is earmarked for payment of annuities to the widows of lighthouse keepers. That also looks fishy.

Are there really that many widows of lighthouse keepers still around? Or are some of the CIA agents in disguise?

A \$600,000 item for the U.S. Naval Academy's laundry service likewise would be a logical place to conceal a CIA appropriation. You can conceal almost anything in a Navy laundry bag.

Other budgetary items that caught my eye ostensibly covered such activities as "brush disposal" and the preservation of ancient Nubian monuments.

Offhand, \$9 million seems like an awful lot of money for the government to be spending to get rid of brushes. Will an ancient Nubian monument sound to me like a perfect hiding place for spies.

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